



Consumer Corner

by Illinois Attorney General LISA MADIGAN



LOOKING FOR A JOB ONLINE? WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INTERNET EMPLOYMENT SCAMS

Today, an increasing number of job seekers are looking for employment online. Often, Internet job searches open up a vast array of opportunities to those looking for work; unfortunately, they may also open the door to employment scams.

Q. I've been using the Internet to conduct a job search. Yesterday, I received an e-mail from someone claiming to be the manager of an overseas supply company. He says he saw my resume on a legitimate job search site. The e-mail claims I can earn \$800 to \$900 per week by using my bank account to transfer funds from the company's clients to the company's accounts. This sounds too good to be true. Am I right to be suspicious?

A. What you describe is a classic Internet employment scam. The increasing popularity of Internet job searches has led to new opportunities for thieves to gain access to consumers' personal identifying information (such as a social security number or a bank account number) and, ultimately, to consumers' money. In the scenario you describe, it is likely that the so-called company "manager" is really trying to lure you into disclosing your bank account number so that he can promptly drain your account.

To entice job-seekers into disclosing their personal identifying information, scam artists may post jobs on legitimate job search sites, create their own phony Web sites, or contact consumers directly by e-mail or message board. If you are searching for a job online, there are some simple precautions you should take:

- Investigate the company. Make sure the company has a real location with a street address and working phone number. Check the name of the company closely. Scam artists may use a company name that is very similar to the name of a legitimate business.
- Review any postings or e-mails from the company for grammatical errors, misspellings, and typos. These are red flags.
- NEVER give out your bank account number, credit card numbers, or PIN codes in response to a job posting or e-mail solicitation, and NEVER wire money to a prospective employer.
- Protect your social security number. While it may be necessary to provide this number later or after you are hired, legitimate employers typically do not need your social security number early in the hiring process.
- Be wary of a prospective employer who pressures you to disclose personal identifying information before you have had a chance to interview or check the employer out. Legitimate employers should be interested in your job skills, not your bank account or social security number. If you believe you have been ripped off by an employment scam, please contact my Office.

ATTORNEY GENERAL LISA MADIGAN'S CONSUMER FRAUD HOTLINES

Chicago
1-800-386-5438
1-800-964-3013 (TTY)

Springfield
1-800-243-0618
1-877-844-5461 (TTY)

Carbondale
1-800-243-0607
1-877-675-9339 (TTY)